

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 2183

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MPOL, PGOV, PINT, UY
SUBJ: GENERAL RAIMUNDEZ COMMENTS ON PRANTL AFFAIR AND FUTURE
PLANS OF ARMY MODERATES

REF: MONTEVIDEO 2121

1. SUMMARY. GENERAL RAIMUNDEZ, COMMANDER FOURTH DIVISION, CHAIRMAN OF ARMED FORCES POLITICAL COMMISSION (COMASPO) AND KEY MEMBER OF ALVAREZ MODERATE ARMY GROUP, SHOWED UP UNEXPECTEDLY AT MY RESIDENCE EVENING JUNE 30 TO ATTEND SMALL FAREWELL DINNER PARTY FOR AID REP HORWITZ. RAIMUNDEZ HAD EARLIER IN WEEK TELEPHONED HORWITZ TO REGRET INVITATION EXPLAINING THAT HE COULD NOT ATTEND BECAUSE MEMBERS OF ALVAREZ' CAMP CONSIDERED IT PRUDENT TO AVOID OPEN CONTACT WITH USG MISSION PERSONNEL DURING TENSE PERIOD OF PRANTL AFFAIR. RAIMUNDEZ GAVE NO EXPLANATION FOR HIS SURPRISE APPEARANCE. HOWEVER I SURMISE FROM HIS CONDUCT AND COMMENTS DURING EVENING THAT HE CAME PRIMARLY TO ASSURE US, FOLLOWING THE PRANTL AFFAIR, THAT ALL WAS WELL WITHIN THE ALVAREZ CAMP AND THAT THEY HAD THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL (E.G. HE POINTEDLY NOTED THAT HE WAS UNARMED AND UN-ACCOMPANIED BY A BODYGUARD OR CHAUFFEUR). WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE, RAIMUNEZ TOLD ME THAT, FOLLOWING A TWO-MONTH PAUSE, WE COULD EXPECT POSITIVE STEPS BY ALVAREZ
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AND SIGNIFICANT IMPLEMENTATION OF HIS PROGRAM BY THE END OF 1978. RAIMUNDEZ ALSO STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT FONMIN ROVIRA WAS THROUGH AND WOULD BE FORMALLY OUSTED VERY SHORTLY AFTER HIS RETURN FROM THE OASGA. THE FOLLOWING ARE DETAILS OF SIGNIFICANT POINTS COVERED DURING MY PRIVATE DISCUSSION WITH RAIMUNDEZ. END SUMMARY.

2. OUTCOME OF THE PRANTL AFFAIR: RAIMUNDEZ INDICATED THAT PRANTL AFFAIR WOULD GO NO FURTHER THAN RETIREMENT FOR CAUSE OF GENERAL PRANTL AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION AGAINST LT. GEN. GAVASSO, WHICH WE UNDERSTAND WILL BE LIMITED TO GAVASSO'S TRANSFER TO POSITION IN CIVILIAN COMMODITY SUPPLY SERVICE. ALTHOUGH ALVAREZ COULD CARRY THE MATTER FURTHER AND IMPLICATE OTHERS HE HAD DECIDED AGAINST THIS. A PURGE OR BLOODBATH OF THE ARMY OFFICER CORPS WAS NOT A VIABLE OPTION. URUGUAY IS A SMALL COUNTRY AND ITS ARMY IS AKIN TO A FAMILY WHICH MUST SETTLE ITS AFFAIRS INTERNALLY WITHOUT RESORT TO DRASTIC MEASURES. MOREOVER, A PURGE WOULD CHANGE THE RULES OF THE GAME AND SET A PRECEDENT THAT COULD RETURN TO HAUNT THOSE WHO EMPLOYED IT. ALVAREZ LIKEWISE COULD NOT BUY OFF HIS ENEMIES OR OPPONENTS, AS IN "BANANA REPUBLICS," SINCE THIS WOULD ALSO CHANGE THE RULES OF THE GAME AND SET AN EQUALLY UNDESIRABLE PRECEDENT. CONSEQUENTLY, ALVAREZ' ONLY ALTERNATIVE WAS TO TRY TO REASON WITH HIS COLLEAGUES AND GET THEM EITHER TO ACCEPT HIS PROGRAM OR AT LEAST REFRAIN FROM BLOCKING IT. THIS AFTER ALL WAS THE "URUGUAYAN WAY" AND ALVAREZ WAS DETERMINED TO PURSUE IT. ONLY IF DEFINITELY CONVINCED THAT THIS WOULD NOT WORK WOULD ALVAREZ AND HIS GROUP, WHO WERE DETERMINED TO IMPLEMENT THEIR PROGRAM OF A RETURN TO NORMALCY, CONSIDER OTHER, MORE DRASTIC MEASURES, SUCH AS "LEAVING SOME OF THEIR COLLEAGUES BESIDE THE ROAD."

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3. OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE: THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE FONMIN ROVIRA'S REPLACEMENT. THIS WOULD TAKE PLACE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER ROVIRA'S RETURN FROM THE VIII OASGA. (COMMENT: INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES FOLLOWING ROVIRA'S RETURN INDICATES THAT HE IS INDEED CLEARING OUT HIS OFFICE. ALTHOUGH HIS REPLACEMENT IS UNKNOWN, IT PRESUMABLY WILL BE AN ALVAREZ ALLY OR AT LEAST SOMEONE WHO WILL BE MORE AMENABLE TO HIS DIRECTION. EN COMMENT) AFTER ROVIRA'S DEPARTURE THERE WILL BE A PAUSE OF TWO MONTHS, FOLLOWING WHICH OTHER STEPS WILL BE TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT KEY ASPECTS OF ALVAREZ' PROGRAM TO RETURN THE COUNTRY TO NORMALCY. BY THE END OF THE YEAR (1978) IMPRESSIVE PROGRESS WILL HAVE BEEN MADE. RAIMUNDEZ WOULD NOT SPECIFY THESE STEPS OR THE PRECISE TIMETABLE FOR THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. BUT HE DID SAY THAT THEY WOULD BE ACTIONS WHICH THE USG WOULD FAVOR AND WHICH WOULD IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. HE THEREFORE APPEALED TO THE USG TO BE PATIENT, TO AVOID PRESSURING THE GOU AND TO LET THE URUGUAYANS WORK THINGS OUT IN THEIR OWN WAY AT THEIR OWN SPEED, CONFIDENT THAT THE TREND WAS ESTABLISHED AND THE EVENTUAL RESULT WOULD BE VERY FAVORABLE TO USG INTERESTS.

4. COMMENT: GENERAL RAIMUNDEZ HAS A REPUTATION FOR CANDOR AND I BELIEVE HE WAS PURPOSELY TRYING TO SEND A SIGNAL TO THE USG. ALTHOUGH THIS MISSION DOES NOT DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF HIS COMMENTS WE ARE MUCH LESS CERTAIN ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE SCENARIO HE PORTRAYS. THERE HAS INDEED BEEN A SHIFT OF POWER TO THE ALVAREZ FORCES, PRIMARILY RESULTING FROM THEIR OPPONENTS' LOSS OF VALUABLE ASSETS. ALVAREZ' KEY GAIN, HOWEVER, WOULD SEEM TO BE THE BREAK IN THE STALEMATE WHICH OFFERS HIM AN OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE AHEAD. THIS ARGUES FOR PROMPT INITIATIVES ON HIS PART RATHER THAN FOR SITTING STILL IN THE WATER FOR TWO MONTHS, DURING WHICH THE BLOCKADE COULD ONCE AGAIN FORM AROUND HIM. WE REALIZE OF COURSE THAT SUCH HESITANCY

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IN THE FACE OF OPPORTUNITY IS THE TRADITIONAL URUGUAYAN WAY, BUT WE ARE MINDFUL THAT THIS IS A WAY WHICH IN THE PAST HAS PRODUCED GENERALLY DISAPPOINTING RESULTS. THUS, WHILE WE EXPECT SOME MOVEMENT WE MUST REMAIN SKEPTICAL ABOUT ANY DRAMATIC PROGRESS.

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